



Athlete Profile (Local)

John Dugan – Going for Gold

Navy veteran John Dugan has his sights set on earning some gold medals at the 2008 National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Never mind that he's competing as a novice—Dugan has luck on his side. The Games, after all, will be held right in his own corner of the country: Omaha, Nebraska. Dugan, 61, lives in Lincoln, roughly 50 miles from where the Games will take place July 25-29, 2008.

About his military service, Dugan said, "I thought it would be neat to join the Navy and see the world." He served from 1964-68, stationed on the east coast and on board ships in the Mediterranean Sea. While he may not be venturing far from home for the Wheelchair Games this summer, Dugan won't have to travel very far to see the world. The world, it seems, will be coming to him with more than 500 veterans from all over the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain joining together for 28th annual event

Dugan's competitive spirit will have him participating in several events, including motorized slalom, a motorized wheelchair rally, and the powerchair 220, a track event for veterans who use powered wheelchairs. Growing up with a love for shooting sports, he also plans to compete in trapshooting and air guns competitions.

Dugan, a paraplegic, first learned about the Wheelchair Games last year while hospitalized at the VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, where the 2007 Games took place. Although he is returning to Milwaukee before this year's event for additional surgery, he plans to use the physical therapy he'll be receiving to remain in top shape for the upcoming competition.

Once an avid motorcycle enthusiast, Dugan worked for BSA and Yamaha dealerships as a mechanic, and even competed in races. His spinal cord injury resulted from a motorcycle accident in 1986.

Like many of the wheelchair athletes who participate in the annual event, he looks forward to being around other wheelchair athletes and believes the Games promote good will and self worth. "I know I'm going to enjoy myself and have fun meeting other vets," said Dugan.

For now, he anxiously waits to experience the thrill of competition once again, and feel the strong camaraderie of his fellow veterans. Also, as an added bonus, because the Games are so close to home, his family will be there to cheer him on. With that kind of luck and ambition, perhaps all that glitters will be gold at the 2008 National Veterans Wheelchair Games for John Dugan.